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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the call by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education for teacher education institutions to delineate a stated philosophy. The paper dramatizes the need for educational philosophers of professional societies to provide leadership in this area of reform. The paper offers numerous examples in which mission statements presented by universities or schools of education are in effect lists of aims, with no philosophical justification for the suggested aims. Educational philosophers such as those in the American Educational Studies Association and the Council of Learned Societies in Education's affiliate organizations can play a vital role in helping institutions to articulate, in a more comprehensive manner, their philosophies. When an educational unit possesses a philosophy and is able to identify the philosophic assumptions upon which it is built, the unit is able to bring a certainty to its institutional behavior, to the content that ought to be taught, and to how it should be taught. Educational philosophers can help units address the metaphysical, epistemological, and axiological questions which undergird their respective world views. (JDD)

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HELP WANTED: PHILOSOPHERS OF EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL ACCREDITATION

by

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INTRODUCTION

The academy or as Jacques Barzun aptly terms it "the house of intellect" has been under a reform microscope for the past ten years. No where within the academy is the heat of the reform microscope felt as intensely as in the area of teacher education.

Several policy proposals have been offered within the past ten years as vehicles for improving teacher education. However, none of these proposals holds the kind of reform significance for teacher education as that held by the **REDESIGN STANDARDS** (1992) and the current **REFINED STANDARDS** (1994) of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.

NCATE, in its reform efforts, has sought to ensure excellence and competence in the education profession, and, toward that end, has established Standards of quality and vigor for teacher preparation programs (Standards, Procedures, and Policies for the Accreditation of Professional Education Units, 1992, 1994). Institutions of higher education responsible for the preparation of students who seek state licensing may through a voluntary self-regulation process pursue NCATE accreditation of their professional education units rather than of specific programs.

A major prerequisite of this accreditation is the meeting of five comprehensive and vigorous categories of standards (the Refined Standards proposes four categories of standards) which cover: the unit's knowledge base, its relationship to the world of practice (i.e., its Curriculum Design, Delivery, and Content), its students, its faculty, and its governance and

resources (i.e., its Accountability). More specifically, units are being required, as a means of satisfying the **Knowledge Base Standard**, to ensure that they have:

> " ... adopted a model(s) that explicates the purposes, process, outcomes, and evaluation of the program. The rationales for the model(s) and the knowledge bases that undergird them are clearly stated along with the goals, philosophy and objectives" (Standards, 1992, p. 47).

While the articulation of a knowledge base, and the development of a model and/or conceptual framework have been particularly difficult for many institutions [2] the focus of this paper will be on the call by NCATE for institutions, in particular teacher education units, to delineate a stated philosophy. The intent of the paper is to highlight some institutional efforts, and to dramatize the need for educational philosophers to use the Council of Learned Societies in Education to provide leadership in this crucial area of reform.

RECOGNIZING THE PROBLEM

As a representative of the Council of Learned Societies on the NCATE Board of Examiners I was continually haunted, on the one hand, by assertions in the educational literature and, on the other, by information provided me as a BOE site visit team member in an institution's Institutional Report. For example, the literature clearly suggests that teacher educators behave according to their philosophy. In fact, the literature posits that it is this philosophical frame of reference that gives rise to paradigms

in teacher education. Several educational thinkers have posited that teacher education is a form of ideology. As such programs are related to the educational ideology held by a particular teacher education institution, even though the relationship may not be made explicit. In other words, there is no such thing as a value-free teacher education, just as others have pointed out that there is no such thing as a value-free education for children.

I was further intrigued by Zeichner's assertion that "A paradigm in teacher education can be thought of as a matrix of beliefs and assumptions about the nature and purposes of schooling, teaching, teachers and their education that gives shape to specific forms of practice in teacher education" (Zeichner, 1983, p. 3).

Educational philosophers like Remi Bamisaiye brought to my attention that " ... philosophy of education is that discipline which is concerned with critically examining problems and issues, as well as setting goals for education as these relate ultimately to promoting our understanding of the nature of man, society and knowledge" (Bamisaiye, 1989, p. 15). In fact, this in turn precipitated my seeing Knight's point that educational philosophy should facilitate the intelligent evaluation of alternative ends, the relation of aims to desired ends, the selection of pedagogical methods that harmonize with aims (Knight, 1989).

As a result, I saw a request for one's philosophy of education as a request to articulate one's educational aims. For as I was reminded by Fitzgibbons (1981) to talk about educational aims or make decisions regarding educational aims is really to deal with

the point of education. And as John Dewey put it " ... to have an aim is to act with meaning, not like an automatic machine, it is to mean to do something and to perceive the meaning of things in light of that intent" (Dewey, 1944).

I saw NCATE's call for a philosophy as the articulation of educational aims. In other words, as Hitt (1973) says explicating why one is doing what one is doing for it is impossible to determine one's means without first deciding on one's ends (p. 66). I was further guided in this perception by Jarolimek's indication that educational aims/ends are usually developed around a set of abstract beliefs, propositions, and assumptions having to do with the nature of human beings, with the nature of society, with what constitutes the good life, with how individuals relate to the ultimate reality, and with the purpose of life (Jarolimek, 1981). Inherent, therefore, in NCATE standards is the need to think philosophically.

SITE VISIT REALITY

As I plyed my wares on site visits as a member of the NCATE Board of Examiners I was jolted by a clear discrepancy between what was being presented in the **Institutional Reports** as a response to what NCATE called for regarding a unit philosophy, and what I had gleaned in the educational literature regarding the articulation of an educational philosophy.

The discrepancy loomed even larger after I visited the office of my mortgage company, Sears Mortgage, and read what was emblazoned on a wall as the Sears Mortgage Corporation "Mission"

and "Philosophy." The document stated that corporation's mission is "To become America's best provider of residential mortgage products and services by constantly working to satisfy our customers' expectations for quality and value. while maintaining the highest levels of integrity and professionalism." The following followed under the caption **Philosophy**:

- We will make quality our top priority in our approach to everything we do.
- We will remember that our most valuable asset is our customers' trust.
- We will provide our customers with the best values in product and service.
- We will design our job processes to make error-free work a realistic objective.
- We will achieve success through teamwork, coordination and communication.
- We will encourage, value and be responsive to the ideas of our employees.
- We will work hard to attract, train, manage and retain quality employees.
- We will provide career development and rewards for superior performance.
- We will encourage creativity and accept reasonable risks to achieve our goals.
- We will strive to balance our short-term priorities with our long-term objectives.

A closer examination of the Sears Mortgage document suggested that what was touted as a **mission** was in fact an aim, and what was delineated as **philosophy** was in reality a set of objectives or outcomes. The denotation of the word "mission" suggests "a (specific) task with which a person or group is charged." Sears Mortgage's charge is to assist qualified homebuyers in securing loans. The connotation of the word "aim" is "the directing of effort toward a goal: a clearly directed intent or purpose." It was clear that Sears' **mission** was for purposes its aim (To become America's best provider of residential mortgage products ....), and what it listed as its philosophy were outcomes/objectives to achieve its aim (e.g., We will provide career development and rewards for superior performance).

I became cognizant of a similar promulgation when I examined some of the School Improvement Plans required in the state of Florida by Blueprint 2000 as part of a new educational accountability reform thrust. What was outlined as **Mission Statements** were in effect aims.

As I paid closer scrutiny to the Institutional Reports I was being presented I began to see some of the following:

> A private eastern university offered as its philosophy a mission to prepare scholar-practitioners committed to deliberative, reflective practice which is both theory-informed and theory-informing, to participatory and collaborative processes, and to facilitation of human growth and development. No where did I find any

development of philosophical thinking as mentioned earlier.

A midwestern public university indicated that the theme "The urban educator as a reflective, innovative professional" was at the core of the model on which the unit's programs were built. The IR went on to say that:

> The concept of the reflective professional dates back to John Dewey's definition of reflective thought: 'Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends, constitutes reflective thought' (Dewey, 1916, p. 6).

Again nowhere did I find further development of any of the metaphysical, epistemological or axiological implications. In other words, there was no philosophical justification for the suggested particular aims of education.

My visit to a public university in Ohio showed the School of Education there as having a theme of "Reflection in Action." While reference was made to the unit's mission there was a total absence of philosophical justification for the unit's educational aim.

The IR of a private four-year liberal arts school revealed the Philosophy of Teacher Education to be eight "desired outcomes." These outcomes were retermed "guiding principles" in order to be politically correct. Nevertheless, no major philosophical justification for the unit's theme of "Teachers and students

constructing meaning in a changing world" could be found in the IR.

One of the nine state universities in Florida uses one short paragraph in its IR to articulate that its teacher education programs are grounded in five core values of intellectual inquiry, excellence in teaching, fostering of learning communities, learning and development and integrity. The extent of philosophical justification ends in that paragraph with brief working descriptions of each of the five core values.

A state institution in Arkansas offers in its IR a theme of "The Informed Professional Educator." This IR indicates that "A philosophy, while in itself broad and encompassing, must inform the beliefs of the Unit personnel." While admitting the foregoing, seven belief statements are offered. These range from "Teacher development grows along a continuum from novice to expert" to "Teacher development begins with the knowledge of the structure and organization of public schools...." There is no philosophical justification to be found in the IR.

HELP WANTED FROM THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHERS

My experience on site visit teams while simply a small sample of the NCATE Colleges of Education do reflect in large measure the warning given by James MacDonald (1977) that "... curriculum builders who begin at the operational level without declaring their underlying purpose of education are not subject to their own control." If I might add curriculum builders who do not offer philosophical justification for their educational aim(s) lack the opportunity to facilitate understanding and provide a clear basis

for dialogue and improvement of the state of the field.

I believe however that educational philosophers such as those in the American Educational Studies Association, and the Council of Learned Societies in Education's affiliate organizations such as the Philosophy of Education Society and the Southeast Philosophy of Education Society can play a vital role in helping institutions to articulate, in a more comprehensive manner, their philosophies. Just as different educational stakeholders provide direction to the NCATE process regarding the development of a unit model, or the identification of a knowledge base, I think it appropos for educational philosophers through CLSE to provide guidance in the development of a unit philosophy.

For example, educational philosophers could contribute to College of Eduycation units realizing that when a unit possesses a philosophy and is able to identify the philosophic assumptions upon which it is built, that unit is able to bring a certainty to its institutional behavior because that behavior is congruent with its philosophy. That behavior whether in the area of curriculum, personnel, student activities, and so on, is a natural outcome of a philosophy and is therefore an extension, reflection, and reinforcement of that philosophy.

Educational philosophers could held units to distinguish between two distinct kinds of beliefs: philosophical beliefs and empirical beliefs. As Fitzgibbons (1981) points out: philosophical beliefs can be characterized as metaphysical, epistemological or normative beliefs; while empirical beliefs in principle can be

confirmed with reference to data derived from observation and/or experimentation.

Educational philosophers could help units to address the metaphysical, epistemological and axiological questions which undergird their respective world-views. As a result, units might better articulate in their IR's their asnwers to such questions as: Is man/woman better understood by looking at him/her from without as an object or from within as a subject? Can man/woman make personal choices and act independently of those forces acting upon him/her? Is man/woman an information transmitter or an information generator? Is man/woman a reality or a potentiality? Is man/woman knowable in scientific terms?

Like Fitzgibbons (1981) educational philosophers could help NCATE-seeking units to shape their Institutional Reports regarding their philosophies by reasoning from certain outcomes that the units think ought to occur in their teacher education programs to the conclusion that certain matter, i.e., content ought to be taught, to the conclusion as to how that matter/content should be taught. and how support units would best facilitate teaching that matter in order to achieve those outcomes which ought to occur. This examination of characteristics that the teacher education program ought to possess and could possess will require that programs think philosophically about education and enhance programs producing (in the IR) the strongest arguments they can for their beliefs.

CONCLUDING CALL

I am sure that the educational philosophers whether in AESA, PES, SEPES, etc., generally concur with the dictum of Bob Burton Brown (1968):

> Teachers like everyone else, can behave only in terms of what seems to then to be so. Their classroom practices are related to their beliefs. What teachers believe and do about educational problems in the classroom depends to a considerable extent upon their fundamental beliefs about (1) people, and why they behave as they do, (2) reality, or the world in which people live, and (3) knowledge, its nature and relationship to what people do. Such beliefs are called a person's philosophic point of view or frame of mind.

NCATE's reform efforts are crying for philosophical help in the area of units articulating their philosophic points of view or frames of mind. Who is better suited to provide that assistance than the educational philosophers? If educational philosophers provide their expertise in sharing some format that institutions could use to enhance their addressing the NCATE Standard that requires the explication of a philosophy then the following words of Bob Burton Brown would take on an added dimension:

> Teachers should be more different than alike, and so should the programs which select and train them. It is perfectly legal for teachers in America to hold diverse beliefs and to behave according to these views in the

> classrooms. Teacher education programs which try to train all teachers in one common mold [through tacit theories] as is the established pattern, deserve all the criticism that has been heaped upon them (Burton, 1986, p. 271).

Burton further adds:

> It is not enough that students have a choice to become an elementary or secondary school teacher, or to specialize in this subject or that. Choices with respect to differing theories of teaching and learning should also be possible. In this case, every teacher would be 'some kind' of teacher, not 'just' a teacher of this grade level or subject. Every teacher would have a specified point of view and in terms of which he[she] is certified competent (Burton, 1968, p. 271).

NCATE has offered the educational philosophers the opportunity to enhance philosophical diversity in teacher education. Is anyone listening?

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1. The new **Refined Standards** require that "The unit has high quality professional education programs that have evolved from a conceptual framework that is articulated, shared, coherent, consistent with the unit's mission, and supported by established and current research and sound professional practices." An indicator of the foregoing is identified as "The conceptual framework addresses the philosophy, purposes, coursework, field

experiences, student outcomes, student assessment and program evaluation."

2. NCATE publications, for example, Reporter, December 1993, p. 11, continually report that the Knowledge Base Standard has proven most difficult for institutions in their pursuit of national accreditation.